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COMPUTER
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Reduced costs make "eyeball-to-eyeball" communications ever more attractive, says Aetna MIS chief Irwin J. Sitkin.

4GL training challenge

The spread of SQL

Teleconference-data links

Digital fax arrives

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in exactly what they see," she says. Universal Information Capture's China bureau employs about 500 workers.

Not surprisingly, domestic data entry services downplay the benefits of offshore services. Besides longer turnarounds, foreign services use outdated equipment, notes Walter Vukas, president of American General Service Corp., a Dearborn, MI-based data entry service that uses only domestic data entry operators. Vukas says he has sold 18-year-old data entry machines to a service bureau in the Philippines.

Many corporations don't want their data going off their premises, much less out of the country, Vukas says. "Many corporations have to trust you," he says. "They want to make sure you are protecting their interests." Vukas, who says American General Service provides data entry services to the big three automakers, remembers when one executive made an unannounced inspection of Vukas' data entry operations at 2 a.m. to check if any data were unsecured on desks or terminals.

Gil Morgan, president of International Computer Services (Miami Lake, FL), which has been using data entry operators in Jamaica since 1964, dispels the security issue. "Some clients actually feel more secure by having their work done abroad," he says. "They believe foreign workers are less inclined to be interested in the confidential subject matter in their files." Morgan also says offshore data entry isn't any riskier than domestic work. "A plane with records can crash on a domestic as well as an international flight," he says.

Walz says cheaper satellite data communications may raise overseas data entry to about 25 percent of the U.S. market. However, both she and Vukas say the future of data entry lies in such underdeveloped technologies as barcoding, optical character recognition, and voice recognition. As these technologies develop, domestic data entry costs will drop to the point at which foreign data entry operations will lose their price advantages, they say. —*Anita Micossi*

COMPUTER MONITORING, WITH FEELING

As computer monitoring of workers—especially data entry operators—increases, labor groups are using the issue in battles with management and are lobbying for legislation to eliminate monitoring.

The Computer and Business Equipment Manufacturers' Association (CBEMA), Washington, offers the following suggestions to data entry managers to ensure that computer monitoring is beneficial to both employees and management.

- Give employees access to their records and regular, supportive feedback.
- Measure only those items essential to meet organizational goals.
- Anticipate individual differences in needs for length and number of breaks or in work speed.
- Be careful about using statistics to inspire competition. Systems in which all individual production scores are circulated or posted can backfire by making employees graded "below average" angry and tense.
- Once reasonable production rates are established, employees tend to resent managers who inch up standards so that operators have to work harder to achieve the same rate of pay. □

DATA ENTRY MANAGERS FLEX TO A POINT

Although corporations seem more willing to offer flexible hours and a four-day work week to data entry workers, they are still holding the line on salaries.

Of the 102 corporations recently surveyed by the Data Entry Management Association (Stamford, CT), 14 percent offer four-day work weeks and 35 percent offer flexible hours, an increase of 10 percent and 12 percent, respectively, over 1984 findings. However, the average salary for data entry operators increased only about 2 percent, to $14,238.

Norman Bodek, president of the association, says the continuing shortage of data entry operators has keyed the increase in the four-day work week and flex-time. "Corporations are trying to accommodate employees to keep them and attract them to data entry," says Bodek. "Large companies can afford to be more flexible in scheduling time because they have larger head counts to work with." Flex-time is popular because about 95 percent of data entry operators are women who may be caring for children, Bodek notes.

For its survey, DEMA contacted 72 large corporations with data entry departments and 30 data entry service bureaus. □

DATA ENTRY DATA

	1983	1984	1985
Shops with 4-day work week	7%	4%	14%
Shops with flextime	34%	23%	35%
Unionized shops	13%	11%	18%
Average pay of operator	$13,630	$13,955	$14,238
Average keystrokes per hour	11,804	11,400	11,944
Average pay of data entry manager	$28,323	$28,634	$29,386

Source: 1985 survey by the Data Entry Management Association